

**STATEMENT OF**  
**THE HONORABLE VERNON J. EHLERS**  
**CHAIRMAN**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS**  
**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE**  
**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Hearing on the NASA Budget for Fiscal Year 2007  
Thursday, February 16, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.  
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

I understand that the budget request for NASA reflects some very difficult funding decisions. In order to align the agency with the President's challenge to travel to the moon and Mars, NASA has reorganized and streamlined its structure again this year under new Administrator Griffin. Despite a 3.2 percent requested increase in FY 2007, in order to fund the next generation human space vehicle and to retire the Shuttle by 2010, \$1.5 billion has been transferred from the science mission budget at NASA. At this time, NASA has been forced to prioritize the completion of the International Space Station and the development of the Crew Exploration Vehicle above the science missions.

While I realize that the impacts of unanticipated budget constraints – on the order of \$3 to 5 billion - have been felt across the entire agency, I remain concerned that we will finance the return to the moon and travel to Mars at the cost of other critical scientific discovery. Basic science and engineering research underpin all of NASA's major accomplishments as well as many of the technologies you and I use everyday. Furthermore, basic research at NASA will support the future exploration endeavor; if we continue to reduce basic research in the out-years, our astronauts will be implementing the Vision with outdated technology, or the implementation will be delayed.

I know that Administrator Griffin is committed to balancing all of these priorities and look forward to working with him and the Committee to do so. However, I continue to be skeptical about the path and timeline being followed, especially in view of the limited funding available at this time.